

REPORT TO THE 59TH MONTANA LEGISLATURE

SIKES ACT PROGRAM 2003/2004

HABITAT ENHANCEMENT ON PUBLIC LANDS FOR WILDLIFE SPECIES THAT ARE FISHED, HUNTED AND TRAPPED



**Montana Department Fish, Wildlife & Parks
January 2005**

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SIKES ACT

The Sikes Act of 1974 (Public Law 92-452) is federal legislation which allows for memoranda of understanding between state fish and game and federal agencies to develop a funding source, and partner in projects, for the restoration of fish and wildlife habitat on public lands. New Mexico is the only state with a fully developed Sikes Act Program.

The program was originally conceived of as a means to implement a habitat stamp which would be required in order to recreate on federal lands. The money from the sale of the stamp would be directed back to state fish and game agencies for use on habitat restoration projects for those wildlife (fish) species that are fished, hunted, and trapped.

About 15 years ago, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks developed agreements with the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Bureau of Land Management to cost share projects on a 50:50 basis for habitat restoration and improvement on public lands. Funds available to FWP have averaged \$75,000 per year.

A sportsmen advisory committee participates in project review. The committee currently includes Chris Marchion of Anaconda Sportsmen; Bob Lovegrove of Western Mt. Fish and Game Assoc.; and John Gibson of Southeastern Sportsmen.

Agency representatives are Skip Kowalski for U.S. Forest Service; Roxanne Falise for U.S. Bureau of Land Management; and Steve Knapp for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. An annual meeting is typically conducted in January or February.

The majority of proposed projects are from the U.S. Forest Service. A project must have written endorsement of the area field biologist from each agency. The number of proposed projects vary from 5 to 45 in any given year. Projects funded vary from 4 to 25.

The objective of the program is habitat enhancement on public lands targeting species that are fished, hunted or trapped.

SIKES ACT 2003 APPROVED PROJECTS

Bureau of Land Management/FWP Project: Dollar amount represents FWP contribution.

\$23,910.95. Cowell Conservation Easement (north of Fort Peck Reservoir). This is an FWP/BLM project to implement a livestock grazing system on FWP easement lands and BLM property. FWP is paying pasture fence costs. BLM is paying for water system development costs. This particular project is a subset of a larger enhancement project. **RESULTS:** Fencing work has been successfully completed. Water development scheduled for completion by fall of 2005.



FWP/U.S. Forest Service Projects: FWP contribution is identified.

\$5,680. Beaverhead/Deerlodge Forest. South Gravellys Sage Grouse Habitat Use. Capture and radio-mark sage grouse to identify important sage brush habitat.

\$5,700. Beaverhead/Deerlodge Forest. Norton Creek Riparian Fence. Fence out 1.5 miles of creek as part of grazing plan strategy to improve riparian vegetation.

\$2,000. Gallatin Forest. Abaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Weed Control. Stop small infestations of weeds before they spread.

\$1,500. Beaverhead/Deerlodge Forest. Pintler R.D. Copper Creek Willow Plantings. Re-establish willows along creek to enhance riparian areas.

\$3,000. Custer Forest. Ekalaka Hills. Noxious Weed Control on Big Game Winter Range. Spray 200 acres of land infested with leafy spurge. FWP received completion report for 2000 year funding.

\$3,000. Prescribed Burning, Lyon Cr. Analysis Area. Ashland R.D. Custer Forest. Burn 200 acres of Ponderosa Pine under-story.

\$31,000. Beartooth R.D. Custer Forest. Re-generation of 50 + acres. This is a long-term project to regenerate aspen to a variety of ages and size to increase habitat usefulness for ruffed grouse.

The before and after pictures on the next page are from the “RUFFED GROUSE – ASPEN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM MONITORING REPORT”, U.S. Forest Service, Custer National Forest, Beartooth R.D., October 2002.



Figure 4: Red Lodge Creek unit – condition before treatment.



Figure 5: Red Lodge Creek unit – condition immediately after treatment.

ADMINISTRATION: \$202.32 for Advisory Committee travel costs and printing of project proposals.

SIKE ACT 2003: TOTAL EXPENDITURE: \$75,993.34

SIKES ACT 2004 APPROVED PROJECTS

FWP/U.S. Forest Service Projects: FWP contribution is identified.

\$3,000. Bitterroot Forest Meadow Creek Riparian Fence. Fence a 1,800 feet by 200 feet reach of creek as part of livestock grazing plan to help maintain bull trout spawning habitat.

\$2,500. Beaverhead/Deerlodge Forest. Louie Lowe Basin Elk Migration. Replace one mile of fence on elk winter range with one mile of let-down fence.

\$9,500. Beaverhead/Deerlodge Forest. Wall Creek Pipeline and Tanks. Help improve Wall Cr. Allotment grazing system to benefit elk winter range and livestock grazing allotment. Develop spring head, put in 9,000 feet of 1.25 inch plastic pipe and install three stock water tanks.

\$5,000. Helena Forest. Bighorn Sheep Conifer Removal. Remove approximately 50 acres of conifers by cutting and burning, which are invading Bighorn Sheep grassland winter range.

FWP/BLM Project: FWP contribution is identified.

\$50,000. Lewistown BLM. Two Crow Grazing Allotment. A F.W.P.contribution to a major livestock grazing system. Seven miles of riparian vegetation and a total of 40,000 acres plus of BLM land will be managed with a wildlife friendly grazing system to benefit elk, deer, upland birds and the hunters who pursue them.

FWP Project:

\$1,638. Ninepipe WMA. Install culvert for improved water flow.

\$1,000. Ninepipe WMA. Weed control.

SIKES ACT 2004: TOTAL EXPENDITURE: \$72,638.



BLM photo courtesy of Chuck Otto

TWO CROW GRAZING ALLOTMENT



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